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Democrats Play Politics On Intelligence Committee

Democratic members of the House Intelligence Committee have come in for strong criticism for authorizing the release of a controversial staff report critical of U.S. intelligence performance in Central America.

Denounced as politically biased and sloppy by intelligence experts in this country, the report has been nevertheless exploited by the Cubans in their radio broadcasts in an effort to convince foreign audiences that the CIA and the Reagan Administration have been covering up right-wing terrorism in El Salvador.

But what makes the criticism of the Intelligence Committee extremely important is the fact that the former deputy director of both the CIA and the Defense Intelligence Agency, Adm. Bobby Inman, resigned his position as a consultant to the committee after the report was made public.

Inman, a darling of the liberals who is usually described as "one of the nation's top intelligence experts," denounced the report as "seriously flawed," saying it was "put out on party lines." He said that intelligence "shouldn't be a party issue" and that "If this country doesn't establish a bipartisan approach to intelligence we are not going to face the problems of the next 50 years."

The staff report was requested by Rep. Charles Rose (D.-N.C.), the chairman of the Subcommittee on Oversight and Evaluation of the Intelligence Committee, who is involved in a tough battle for re-election in North Carolina's 7th District against conservative Republican Ed Johnson.

In an apparent effort to embarrass the Administration and grab headlines, Rep. Rose and fellow Democrats on the committee decided September 22 to release the report over the objections of the CIA, the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) and the National Security Agency (NSA.)

Although the decision was made at a secret session of the full committee, Rep. Bill Young (R.-Fla.), the ranking Republican member of the committee, has revealed that all of the minority members objected to its release. This would include Kenneth Robinson (Va.), Robert McClellan (Ill.), William Whitehurst (Va.), as well as Bob Stump (Ariz.), who recently switched his party affiliation from Democratic to Republican.

Rep. Rose has said the report "certainly represents my views and, I would say, the views of the majority," which would include Edward Boland (Mass.), the chairman of the committee, Norman Mineta (Calif.), Lee Hamilton (Ind.), Albert Gore Jr. (Tenn.), Clement Zablocki (Wis.), Romano Mazzoli (Ky.) and Wyche Fowler (Ga.).

Stories about the report were generated in both the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*, with Rep. Rose being quoted as saying that it demonstrated the need for the U.S. intelligence agencies to retain their "independence" and not be "manipulated" by the Administration.

But Rep. Young's devastating critique of the report has not generated similar coverage.

Inserted into the October 1 *Congressional Record*, the critique described the report as "slanted and unfair," saying that its four specific criticisms of the intelligence agencies "turn out to be either petty and minor or a misunderstanding of the data by the staff authors of the report."

For instance, the report criticizes a CIA official for having told the Intelligence Committee that "lots of ships have been traced" from the Soviet Union through various countries to Nicaragua, when, in fact, the CIA could only show "a very few examples."

The critique asks, "How many are 'many.' How few are 'few'? The point, of course, is that arms are flowing from the Soviet Union through other countries to Nicaragua."

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